



On Cursing Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī¹

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Know that the Ahl al-Sunnah differed in the matter of the ruling upon Yazīd, the son of Mu'āwiyah and his successor. That he was a disbeliever [*takfir*] is the opinion of the grandson of Ibn al-Jawzī [Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī] and others and that:

When the blessed head of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ was brought to him, Yazīd assembled the people of Shām and rapped at it with a stick and uttered the famous lines of Zab'arī:

*layta ashyākhi bi badrin shahidū*²

He added some more lines to the above which are explicit in apostacy. Ibn al-Jawzī as reported by his grandson said:

‘It is not surprising that Ibn Ziyād murdered Ḥusayn; it is rather surprising that he humiliated Ḥusayn and rapped upon his front teeth and lips with a cane; and his forcing the blessed progeny of the Prophet ﷺ to ride bareheaded on camels’ and he mentioned many other ugly things that are famous about Yazīd. ‘and that he sent the blessed head [of Imām Ḥusayn] back to Madinah and its smell transformed.’

[Ibn al-Jawzī] then said,

‘His sole purpose was to display the [blessed] head and cause a scandal. It is permissible to wash, shroud and pray even upon the corpses of Khawārij and other rebels, and bury them [in Muslim graveyards]. If he [Yazīd] did not have the grudge of pagan times and the spite of Badr in his heart, he would have respected the blessed head of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ when it reached him and then

¹ Excerpted from: *Al-Ṣawāyiq al-Muḥriqah* by Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī [Chapter Eleven pg.270]

² *layta ashyākhi bi badrin shahidū*: were it that my forefathers [infidels who perished] in Badr witnessed this; *jaz'a'l khazraji min waq'ayi'l asal*: the wails of Khazraj on our getting even with them

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washed it, shrouded it and buried it. He would have behaved respectfully towards the blessed progeny of the Prophet ﷺ and been kind to them.’ [End of Ibn al-Jawzī’s comments reported from his grandson.]

Another group says: He is not a *kāfir* because the reasons to rule one a *kāfir* are not proven for him and we have no evidence for the same. The fundamental rule is that he remains a muslim unless there is compelling proof that makes him an apostate. There are famous reports about Yazīd contradicting those which have been mentioned above. It is said that when the blessed head of Imām Ḥusayn reached him, he said: ‘May Allah have mercy on you O Ḥusayn. The man who murdered you did not recognize the right of kinship.’ He rejected Ibn Ziyād [and his actions] and said: ‘He has planted my hate in the heart of every good and bad until doomsday.’ He then sent the women of Ḥusayn’s household and the blessed head with them to Madinah for a burial.

Obviously, anything in the above two positions cannot be proven. Yet basically, he is considered a Muslim. So we must take this fundamental precept and examine anything that makes him go out of Islam. Therefore a group of researchers said that the most accurate position in this issue is to tarry upon his state and surrender [*tafwīḍ*] the matter to Allāh ﷻ because He knows of the mysterious, the covert, the secrets that are hidden and that which is concealed in the hearts. We do not propose for his apostasy and this is most accurate and the safest path. Yet, in spite of his being a Muslim, he was a transgressor, a sinner, a criminal, a drunk and a tyrant.

The Prophet ﷺ foretold this as reported in the Musnad of Abu Ya’lā – though it is a weak report – from Abu ‘Ubaydah that RasūlAllāh ﷺ said:

‘The affairs of my ummah shall not be fissured until a man from the Banū Umayyah named Yazīd shall cleave it’

Ruyanī reported in his Musnad from Abū Dardā’a that he said: I heard the Prophet ﷺ say:

‘The first person to transmogrify my tradition is a man from the Banū Umayyah, who shall be called Yazīd’

In these two hadith there is proof that the *khilafah* or rule of Mu’āwiyah is not similar to that of his son or other successors of Banū Umayyah. Because the Prophet ﷺ foretold that the first one to cause a split in the affairs of his nation and transmute his tradition would be Yazīd; so, it is understood that Mu’āwiyah did not alter the tradition of the Prophet nor disunited the nation – it has been described earlier that he was a *mujtahid*. This position is aided by the actions of what the rightly guided Imām³ did as described by Ibn Sīrīn and others that: someone attacked Mu’āwiyah in the presence of ‘Umar ibn

³ the phrase used is *al-Imam al-Mahdī*: lexically, it means the rightly guided imam; there is a clever undertone to the usage. Ibn Sīrīn is reported to have said that the Mahdi mentioned in the Hadith is none other than ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

‘Abd al-‘Azīz, so he lashed him thrice along with another person for calling Yazīd, his son, as the ‘Leader of Believers’⁴, who was lashed twenty.

So ponder on the huge difference between the two [father and son]. Abū Hurayrah had this knowledge informed by the Prophet ﷺ on that which shall come to pass concerning Yazīd. Therefore he used to pray: ‘O Allah I seek your refuge from the head of [the year] Sixty and the rule of youth’⁵ Allāh ﷻ accepted his prayer and he passed away in the year fifty nine; the death of Mu’āwiyah and the succession of Yazīd is in the year sixty. Thus, Abū Hurayrah knew about the succession of Yazīd in that year hence he sought refuge from the evil of that year. He knew the ugliness of these events because the True and Veritable Prophet ﷺ had informed him of these events.

Nawfal ibn Abu Furāt said: I was with ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and a man said: ‘The Leader of Believers, Yazīd the son of Mu’āwiyah said..’ ‘Umar remarked: ‘Did you say Yazīd, the Leader of Believers?’ And he ordered this person to be lashed twenty times.

His extravagance in sinning terrorized the people of Madinah. Wāqidī reports in a chain from ‘Abdullāh ibn Hanḏalah, the son of al-Ghasīl⁶: ‘By Allāh! We did not go out with Yazīd except fearing that stones may rain from the heavens.’ Because he was a person who married the bondswoman-mothers⁷ and his own sisters and daughters and drank wine and forsook prayer.

Dhahabī says: When Yazīd dealt with the people of Madinah in the manner he did, along with his drinking wine and committing sins, the people revolted and many rebelled; Allah did not give him a bounteous life. After what he did in the year 63 and this reached the people of Madinah, they went out against him and to oust him; Yazīd sent a huge army with orders to exterminate them [the noble rebels]. On the outskirts of Taybah the battle of Ḥarrah took place, and how can one describe the event of Ḥarrah!

Ḥasan⁸ mentioned it once and said: ‘It was nigh that none in that battle would survive; a great host of Sahabah and others were martyred in this battle. We belong to Allah Alone and to Allah is our return.’

Even though they⁹ are all unanimous that he was a *fāsiq*, a transgressor, a sinner; they differed whether it is permissible to curse him specifically by his name.

Some have permitted it, like Ibn al-Jawzi who reports from Imām Aḥmad and others in his book named: *Al-Radd ala al-Mut’aṣṣib al-‘Anīd al-Māniy liman Dhamma Yazīd*¹⁰:

⁴ *Amīr al-Mu’minīn*, the title given to the Muslim ruler.

⁵ *allahumma innī a’ūdhu bika min ra’asi’s sittīn wa imāratī’s ṣibyān*

⁶ *al-Ghasīl* – is the title given to the martyred companion whose martyred body was washed by the angels. ‘Abdullāh in question here, is his son.

⁷ *umm walad* means the mother of the child; if the bondswoman becomes the mother of the child, she becomes free upon the death of her master and it is illegal to sell her. The word used is *umm’hāt al-awlād*.

⁸ most likely Imam Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ؓ

⁹ that is all groups [regarding Yazīd] among the Ahl al-Sunnah.

A questioner asked me about Yazīd, the son of Mu'āwiyah. I said: 'What he did, is sufficient for him.' He asked: 'Is it permissible to curse him?' I said: 'Scrupulous and pious scholars have permitted it among whom is Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal because he mentioned Yazīd and he said 'may he be accursed.'

Ibn al-Jawzī then reports from Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā that he reported it in his book '*Al-Mu'tamad*' through the chain reaching upto Ṣālih ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal that he said:

'I said to my father [Aḥmad ibn Hanbal] that people say that we love Yazīd. He said: 'My son. Does anyone who believes in Allāh bear love for Yazīd? And why should one hesitate to send curses on him, he who has been cursed by Allāh in His Book? I said, 'Where did Allah curse Yazīd in His Book?' He replied: '***Then, do you expect that if you were given the rule of the land to cause evil and mischief on earth and severe the bonds of kinship? These are the ones whom Allāh has cursed and made them deaf and blinded their sight***'

¹¹. [Imām Aḥmad said]: Is there any mischief or evil greater than this murder?'

In another report, he said: 'My son! What can I say about that man whom Allāh has cursed in His Book' and then mentioned the verse [above].

Ibn al-Jawzī said:

Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā wrote a book on those who deserve to be accursed and mentioned Yazīd as one of them. He then quoted the Ḥadīth: 'Whosoever caused fear for the people of Madinah and oppressed them, Allāh ﷻ shall make him afraid; and the damnation of Allāh, His angels and all the people be upon him.' Nobody disputes the fact that Yazīd fought with the people of Madinah and sent an army that terrorized the people of Madinah. [End of Ibn al-Jawzī's comment]

The Ḥadīth mentioned above has been reported in Muslim. The army sent by Yazīd killed and terrorized the residents of Madinah; they committed atrocities and Madinah was pillaged freely; this is well known. They were so horrific that more than 300 virgins were violated and about the same number of companions were killed along with about 700 people who were reciters of the Qur'ān. Madinah was pillaged without restraint and the congregation [*jamā'ah*] in the Prophet's Mosque was abandoned for many days. Nobody could enter the holy mosque; dogs and wolves entered the mosque and urinated on the blessed pulpit of RasūlAllāh ﷺ. This came true just as it was foretold by RasūlAllāh ﷺ.

¹⁰ *Al-Radd ala al-Mut'aṣṣib al-'Anīd Al-Māniy liman Dhamma Yazid*: Refutation of the Adamant Bigot who Prevents people from condemning Yazīd.

¹¹ *fa hal 'asaytum in tawallaytum an tufsidū fī'l arḍi wa tuqattī'ū arḥāmakum. ulāyika'l ladhīna la'nahumullāh fa aṣammahum wa a'mā abṣārahum.* [sūrah Muḥammad, v.22-23]

The commander of that army spared no quarter and he was pleased with nothing less than swearing allegiance to Yazīd on the pain of slavery, that if he [Yazīd] wished he could manumit them or if he wished he could sell them. One of the Medinians swore on the Book and Sunnah or RasūlAllāh ﷺ. The commander smote his neck. This was what happened in the event of Ḥarrah.

This army then proceeded to [Makkah to] fight Ibn al-Zubayr. They surrounded it and began pelting stones on the holy Ka'bah with catapults; and then they burned down the Ka'bah ¹². What can be worse or more depraved than these evil and horrendous acts which were committed in his [Yazīd] time and by his orders?

This is a fulfilling of the prophecy described in the Ḥadīth: 'The affairs of my nation shall be steadfast and firm until they are split asunder by a man in Banū Umayyah named Yazīd.'

Some others said that it is not permissible to curse him because we have no [definitive] proof that necessitates it. Imām Ghazālī ruled it thus and he wrote a lengthy justification; this is in accordance with the principles of our Imāms [Shāfi'īs] who wrote clearly that it is not permissible to curse a person specifically by his name, except those who are confirmed to have died as *kāfir*. Like, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab etc.

As for those whom we do not know for certain if that they died as *kāfirs*, it is not permissible to curse them. It is not permissible to curse even those disbelievers in the present who are inimical [to Muslims]. Because damnation [*la'an*] means to be 'rejected from the Mercy of Allāh' and 'to despair'. Only those who can know [with certainty] that the person died as a disbeliever can say so; and those who don't, cannot. Because it is quite possible that a disbeliever might die upon Islām in his last breath.

If you understand this, you will see that [it is therefore] they made it impermissible to curse Yazīd, even though he was a transgressor, a sinner and a filthy person.

Even if we suppose that he [truly] ordered the assassination of Ḥusayn and he was pleased with the murder – it is a filthy thing unless he considered it as a permissible act. Even if you extrapolate it with erroneous reasoning, it is still remains an enormity; not disbelief, that he ordered the murder and was pleased with the act. There is no authentic evidence that he ordered the murder.

Rather, the opposite of it [that he disavowed the murder] has been reported as I have described earlier.

As for the proof given by Imām Aḥmad that it is permissible to curse him using the verse '***They are those whom Allāh has damned***' [mentioned earlier]; and the evidence used by others from the Ḥadīth of Muslim that RasūlAllāh ﷺ said: 'Whosoever terrorized the

¹² The roof of Ka'bah was made of wood and they bombed it with fire-laden stones.

residents of Madinah..’: There is no proof in it to curse Yazīd specifically and by his name.

If one says, he was among those [who deserved damnation] then there is no dispute as long as it is not specifically by his name. Therefore it is unanimously agreed that it is permissible to send damnation upon the murderer of Ḥusayn or anyone who ordered his murder or permitted it or was pleased with it – without mentioning the name of Yazīd.

Just like it is permissible to send damnation upon one who drinks wine without naming anyone specifically. This is how it is in the verse and the tradition. Because the damnation there is not specific and for a person, but rather it is generic for one who ‘cuts the bonds of kinship’ and ‘one who terrorizes the people of Madinah’. It is unanimously permitted because it is generic and not specific. Then, how can Imām Aḥmad or others use this as an evidence to curse a person by his name?

To summarize, it is not permissible to curse Yazīd specifically and by his name; and there is no proof in the Book or tradition to do so [curse by the name].

Ibn Ṣalāḥ is among the greatest and prominent imams of [Shāfi’ī] fiqh and Ḥadīth. I have seen his *fatwā* in which he was asked about sending damnation upon Yazīd because he ordered the murder of Al-Ḥusayn.

[He answered:] We have no evidence that he ordered the assassination of Imām Ḥusayn ؑ. That which is preserved is that the person who ordered the murder of Imām Ḥusayn – may Allāh ؑ honor him – was ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Ziyād and he was in Iraq at that time. It has been reported in Ḥadīth that cursing a Muslim is like killing him. The murderer of Imām Ḥusayn will not be ruled a disbeliever on account of this deed; rather, he committed an egregious act and an enormity. Only the murderer of prophets will be ruled an apostate [not anyone else].

Concerning Yazīd, there are three groups:

1. People who love him and patronize him;
2. People who curse him and revile him;
3. The moderate among these, who neither love him nor damn him – and consider him [Yazīd] like other kings in Islām and the unrighteous khalīfahs.¹³

This [third] group is the correct one and is the path [madh’hab] of those who are well versed in history and know the principles of the Pure Sharī’ah. May Allāh make us among the best and the righteous ones in this path. [End of what Ibn Ṣalāḥ said, quoted verbatim.]

¹³ Those rulers who have been depraved and debauched; examples abound in history and present in this age. But we cannot say that all of these rulers became *kāfir* unless there is hard evidence.

In the book *Al-Anwār*, by one of our latter day imams: Rebels are neither transgressors nor disbelievers. They are merely mistaken in what they have chosen and follow; it is not permissible to revile [*ta'an*] Mu'āwiyah because he is among the prominent companions [*kibār al-ṣaḥābah*]; neither is it permissible to curse Yazīd, nor rule him *kāfir*, because he is considered among the group of Muslims. And what he did or [deserves for that] is surrendered to Allāh's Wish whether to punish him or pardon him. That is what Ghazālī and Mutawallī have said.

